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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 120295

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS CASC ET

SUBJECT: PROJECT HOPE

EYES ONLY CHARGE

REFS: (A) ASMARA 417; (B) ASMARA 431; (C) ADDIS 6156

1. DR. WALSH AND MARC SCOTT OF PROJECT HOPE CALLED ON DEPT OFFICERS JUNE 5 TO DISCUSS THAT ORGANIZATION'S FUTURE PLANS IN ETHIOPIA IN LIGHT ELF APPROACHES TO HOPE REPRESENTATIVES REPORTED REFTELS A AND B AND EMBASSY ADDIS' COMMENTS REFTEL C.

2. WHILE WALSH STATED FINAL DECISION NOT YET MADE, IT VERY OBVIOUS THAT HE LEANING HEAVILY AGAINST ESTABLISHING ANY PROGRAM IN ERITREA. SEVERAL RECENT DEVELOPMENTS HAVE SOURED HIM RE POSSIBLE OPERATION IN ASMARA, INCLUDING (A) RECENT WARNINGS BY ELF "LIAISON MAN" RE SECURITY SITUATION AND ELF INSTRUCTIONS AS TO HOW HOPE SHOULD OPERTY SITUATION AND (B) DETERIORATION OF EARLIER IEG COMMITMENT TO TEACHING PROGRAMS WHICH HOPE WAS TO CONDUCT (ALL BUT ONE TEACHING PROGRAM HAS BEEN DROPPED BECAUSE IEG IS "FINANCIALLY STRAPPED")
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AND (C) EXHORBITANT COSTS WHICH HOPE WILL HAVE TO PAY TO FLY

NEEDED SUPPLIES TO ETHIOPIA, INCLUDING COST OF EAL CHARTER FROM FRANKFURT TO ASMARA.

3. RE ELF PROBLEM WALSH STATED IT WAS NOT PHYSICAL DANGER SO MUCH WHICH CONCERNED HIM BUT THAT ELF HAS PUT HOPE IN "STRANGE, UNTENABLE POSITION". THEY HAVE SET STAGE TO PLACE BLAME ON IEG AND SECOND DIVISION FOR ANY KIDNAPPING OR PROVOCATION AGAINST HOPE BY ELF. IN EFFECT, ACCORDING WALSH, ELF CONTACT TOLD HOPE REPRESENTATIVES THAT IF YOU MAKE MAJOR EFFORT EVEN IN ERITREA OR DO ANYTHING TO INDICATE YOU ARE FAVORING ETHIOPIANS VIS-A-VIS ERITREANS, YOU CAN BE SURE THERE WILL BE INCIDENT AND WE WILL EFFECTIVELY BLAME IT ON SECOND DIVISION. HOPE, OF COURSE, COULD NOT LIVE WITH SITUATION SUCH AS THIS SINCE ITS CONTRACT IS WITH IEG FROM WHOM IT MUST RECEIVE GENERAL GUIDANCE. YET FROM PRACTICAL STANDPOINT, IF HOPE WERE TO DO SOMETHING WHICH WAS UNACCEPTABLE TO ELF, IT COULD NOT RELY ON PROTECTION BY ETHIOPIAN SECURITY FORCES, WHICH ALREADY HAVE SHOWN THEY NOT ABLE TO CONTROL ELF.

4. WALSH POINTED OUT THAT NUMBER OF MEDICAL PERSONNEL WHOM HE HAD HIRED WERE FAMILY PEOPLE WITH SEVERAL CHILDREN AND MOST OF THEM HAD NEVER BEEN OVERSEAS BEFORE. IF THEY HAD TO KEEP VERY LOW PROFILE AND BE RESTRICTED TO ASMARA, EXPERIENCE WOULD NOT APPEAL TO THEM. MOREOVER, PSYCHOLOGICAL HARRASSMENT TO WHICH THEY COULD BE SUBJECTED BOUND TO HAVE FURTHER UNSETTLING EFFECT ON THEM. THEY COULD NOT PERFORM PROPERLY UNDER SUCH CONDITIONS. FINALLY, HUNDRED EMPLOYEES PLUS FAMILIES WHOM WALSH WOULD BE ASSIGNING TO ASMARA ARE PLACING THEIR FULL CONFIDENCE IN HIM. IF HE WERE TO SEND PEOPLE INTO SITUATION AS OBSCURE AND POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS AS ONE IN ERITREA AND SOMETHING SHOULD HAPPEN TO ANY ONE OF THEM, HE WOULD BE EXPOSING HIMSELF TO CHARGE OF COMPLETE IRRESPONSIBILITY. HE COULD NOT AFFORD TO DO THIS, GIVEN HOPE'S WORLDWIDE REPUTATION.

5. ONLY ADVICE WHICH DEPOFFS HAVE PASSED TO WALSH TO DATE IS THAT CONTAINED REFTTEL C, SPECIFICALLY THAT EMBASSY ADDIS HAS RECOMMENDED THAT HOPE NOT ACT TOO HASTILY BUT FOR PRESENT THINK IN TERMS OF POSTPONING SENDING IN
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ADDITIONAL PEOPLE RATHER THAN ABANDONING PROJECT COMPLETELY. AT SAME TIME DEPOFFS ACCEPTED THAT IT WAS DECISION WHICH HOPE ITSELF HAD TO MAKE IN LIGHT ITS OWN INTERESTS AND CONCERNS.

6. WALSH REITERATED ONLY FIRM DECISION PUBLICLY MADE WAS TO DELAY, BUT FOR REASONS GIVEN ABOVE HE COULD NOT JUSTIFY PROCEEDING WITH PLANS TO ESTABLISH PROGRAM IN ASMARA. AT

SAME TIME HE DID FEEL SOME OBLIGATION TO IEG. HE THEREFORE PLANNED TO SEND MARC SCOTT TO ADDIS THIS WEEKEND FOR THOROUGH DISCUSSION OF SITUATION WITH MINISTER OF HEALTH (AND POSSIBLY FOREIGN MINISTER, IF EMBASSY THOUGHT IT

DESIRABLE TO SEE LATTER). SCOTT WOULD PROPOSE, ON BASIS THAT IEG NOT RPT NOT NOW IN POSITION TO FINANCE MORE EXTENSIVE PROGRAM ORIGINALLY PLANNED IN ASMARA AS WELL AS DETERIORATING SECURITY SITUATION THERE, THAT HOPE WOULD BE WILLING TO PARTICIPATE IN LIMITED TEACHING PROGRAM IN ADDIS IN LIEU ANY OPERATIONS IN ASMARA.

7. SCOTT WILL CONSULT WITH CHARGE BOTH BEFORE AND AFTER MEETING WITH IEG OFFICIALS. WHILE WALSH WOULD WELCOME CHARGE'S ACCOMPANYING SCOTT TO MEETINGS, IF CHARGE DID NOT GO HE PREFERRED THAT NO OTHER EMBOFF BE INVOLVED. IN DEPT'S VIEW IT WOULD BE BETTER FOR CHARGE NOT TO PARTICIPATE IN MEETINGS IN ORDER AVOID CREATING IMPRESSION WITHIN IEG THAT USG CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH HOPE DECISION.

8. THIS TELEGRAM IS BEING SENT EXDIS TO ADDIS ONLY ON BASIS STRONG WALSH REQUEST THAT FOR TIME BEING ITS CONTENTS BE RESTRICTED TO CHARGE THERE AND NOT DISCUSSED WITH OTHER OFFICERS IN EMBASSY OR WITH ASMARA. WALSH IS VERY CONCERNED ABOUT SECURITY HOPE'S TWELVE EMPLOYEES ALREADY IN ASMARA AND FEARS THAT IF THERE IS ANY LEAK IN PLANS TO PULL OUT OF ERITREA, PERSONNEL MIGHT BE IN SOME DANGER. IT IS OUR UNDERSTANDING THAT HOPE WILL PROCEED QUICKLY TO MOVE ITS PEOPLE OUT OF ASMARA FOLLOWING DECISIONS RESULTING FROM NEXT WEEK'S DISCUSSIONS IN ADDIS. KISSINGER

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